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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S OPEN LETTER TO ORF-TV PROTESTING  
OFFENSIVE STATEMENTS

1. This afternoon, Embassy delivered the following letter to the head of Austria's public broadcaster, ORF. After delivery, we released the text publicly. The letter protests ORF-TV's failure to condemn racist statements made against President-elect Obama and American society during a nation-wide live broadcast on Nov. 5. The Ambassador demands a public condemnation by the broadcaster.

2. Begin text:

November 14, 2008: Dr. Alexander Wrabetz, Director-General, ORF, ORF-Zentrum, Wuerzburggasse 30, 1136 Wien.

Dear Director-General Wrabetz: This letter concerns remarks made by former ORF correspondent Klaus Emmerich about President-elect Barack Obama during an early-morning, live broadcast on ORF-TV on November 5, 2008.

As the representative of the President of the United States to the Republic of Austria, I strongly condemn these racist statements. They are an affront to the President-elect and to the people of the United States.

Since these offensive comments aired, the U.S. Embassy has looked for and hoped for a formal public statement from ORF condemning Mr. Emmerich's comments. However, except for some media reports quoting your spokesperson as distancing ORF from Mr. Emmerich's comments, no such categorical rejection has emerged.

In my opinion, two distinct problems are involved in this controversy. The first is the responsibility of ORF, as a public broadcaster, to clearly condemn remarks that crossed the bounds of civil discourse and should be unacceptable in a modern democracy such as Austria. The need for such a declaration is obvious as, according to Austrian media, Mr. Emmerich made these comments to an audience of some 1.2 million viewers.

The second problem is a lack of outrage among and condemnation from leading public figures and organizations in Austria. Except for the Green Party, which protested Mr. Emmerich's remarks on November 6, I am unaware of any other official condemnation. I do not ask you to respond for others, but I do request that you issue a clear, public declaration condemning these remarks on behalf of the public broadcaster that you direct.

Given the dismay that Mr. Emmerich's remarks have caused my Embassy colleagues, other American citizens, and, I am confident, many in Austria as well, I will release this letter to the public after it is delivered to you.

Sincerely yours,  
David F. Girard-diCarlo

End text.  
GIRARD-DICARLO